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"When I was very young, I learned
To read good books, and thus discerned
The rules of good and evil:
How Abel and Sir Galahad
Were good, but Cain was awful bad,
And Lancelot (of course it's sad)
Was finished by the devil.

"My teachers never plagued my mind
With knowledge of a harder kind
Until a wise professor
Declared that I must learn, as well,
To love my native land, and tell
Why other Lands are doomed to hell
Without an intercessor.

"So, while I grew in grace and years,
I studied, with abundant tears
(For tears improve tuition)
How Burke and Lincoln shaped, with awe,
The frame of Democratic law;
And thus I soon began to draw
Themes from the great tradition * * *

"Little girl," I interrupted, violently, "if Doctor Johnson was a pedant, he at least knew what he wanted to teach. Your instructors, so far as I can see, started out to make you a prude; they changed their minds, to make you a patriot; and all they have really done is to make you a prig. This scheme of using literature to 'stimulate interest' in doctrine—whatever the doctrine may be—is a long way from teaching literature for what it really is, and. . ."

But the frightened little girl had disappeared, and I found myself confronted by a third ghost, who said absolutely nothing. He was a pallid though confident individual, dressed more or less like a well-to-do nondescript modern citizen, except for his bulging coat-pockets. One of these was crammed with folded manuscripts, monographs, and educational leaflets (I

thought I saw the HIGH SCHOOL JOURNAL, too); and from the other pocket, while I was staring at him, he complacently produced a queer squirming mass which resolved itself, when he set it down near my feet, into four white mice with their tails tied together. When the mice started vainly to scurry away in four different directions, the point of a stubby pencil fastened at the intersection of their tails began to scratch zigzags on my floor; and I realized that I was privileged to witness the construction of a graph indicating the resultant of imperfectly-harmonized individual forces in a social group.

But as I have already implied, my patience was uncommonly thin that afternoon, and I did not follow the demonstration with all the respect due to my pallid colleague. Instead, I commented somewhat bitterly:

"Now, you have come, I presume, after the polysyllables and the patriotism, to tell me that they are both wrong, and to prove that the only right way of teaching is on the basis of knowledge of the pupils' natures furnished by experimental psychology. That is very fine, so far as it goes; but *what* am I to teach my human mice, after I've learned all about their temperamental motives for being contrary? Honestly, I can't think that you've carried me very much nearer a solution of the main problem; and unless I'm to go back to the dictionary. . ."

But somehow nothing is ever brought to completion in an allegory or an educational conference. Just at that moment one of my students, who was in trouble with the punctuation of his "long theme," rapped at my door; and, as the third ghost melted into vacancy, I cried, "Come in!" and prepared for a heart-to-heart chat about semi-colons.

NEWS WRITING AS PRACTICE IN HIGH SCHOOLS

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A GREAT DEAL has been said and written about the difference between journalism and literature. Sometimes the style of a novelist or story-writer is referred to as journalistic, meaning that his creation is rather a recital of events, in their outward aspect, than a subtle interpretation such as one expects from a master such as Hawthorne or Hardy or James. In short, when it is used in this way the word journalistic carries the meaning of superficial.

Yet that need not be taken as a reproach. Much of the best literature deals with the surface of life and contains nothing to which anybody but a highly imaginative person could attach hidden and profound meanings.

That the plainest of men can understand what Dickens is talking about, does not keep the books of Dickens from being just as truly literature as those of James or Meredith. And there are always turning up, in the columns of daily newspapers, passages that discerning critics place in the class of literature.

If a deep thinker goes to the bottom of a study of journalism and literature, he may find evidences of their essential separateness one from the other, and his statement of differences may be quite convincing. But the truth probably is that, as far as the ordinary person can see, there are more similarities than dissimilarities. The safest and wisest way to look at it is that journalism

is a part of literature. It has purposes peculiar to itself, and methods peculiar to itself. But writing for the newspapers should be thought about as just one branch of all writing. In general, it calls for the same sort of study and practice, in the early stages of preparation, as are required for the writing of history, biography, novels and short stories.

To most persons no form of writing is so vital as that which is done for newspapers, because it deals with the actual life of the day. Every man is interested in what goes on in his community; when the streets are going to be paved, the robbing of a neighbor's hen house, meetings that are being held, the chasing of a pickpocket down the main street, the outcome of baseball games, social and political doings, and the thousand and one other things that make up what we know as news. And it follows that he is apt to be more keenly interested in the way in which all these happenings are told than in writing of another sort.

This factor of lively initial interest, I should say, constitutes a good reason why news writing should be a splendid form of practice for students in high schools.

I remember that when I was in school we used to be directed to write compositions on all manner of dry subjects. It was a painful effort. There was absolutely no inspiration—you just had to force yourself to look up facts in books and to put something down on paper. And usually that something was dull both to yourself and the teacher who had to read it. I suppose that method has passed. I hope so. But from what I am told of the methods followed in schools I believe the teachers could profitably go a great deal farther than they do in using current happenings, in the life of the community, as practice material.

Suppose, for example, that a fire occurs. It may be that all of the members of the English composition class see it. What could be a better exercise than for them to "write up" the fire? True, they may not be able to go to the owner of the building, the fire chief, and policeman on the beat, and others, and ask the questions that a reporter would have to ask. But what they see with their own eyes gives them subject-matter enough.

It is not necessary to their drill in news writing that there be calamities, sensations. The homely happenings of everyday life, in their homes, in the streets, at church, at parties—these are all grist for the mill.

The members of the journalism class that I teach understand that they are to be always on the lookout for "anything that turns up." Sometimes on Friday I give out an assignment for Monday and then add:

"But if anything unusual turns up between now and then, you can write that up instead." The idea is to give as much of the true newspaper flavor to the work as possible. There is plenty of time later to come back to the original assignment.

This same plan can be carried out, to a large extent in schools. In every boy or girl's life, every day, things are happening which are of consuming interest to that boy or girl. They may not be interesting to other people, but they are to the one principally concerned. It may be a game, an intertainment, a school debate, a competition of one sort or another with a neighbor. Whatever it is, it is something to write about. The teacher who takes the trouble to ask a few questions will always find that the members of his class have had personal experiences—and it does not matter how simple these were—which can be used in the way I have suggested.

The quality that is most essential in news writing is simplicity. And, somehow, it is often the most difficult one to drill into students, whether in college or high school. There seems to be some queer instinctive tendency to say a thing in a roundabout way rather than in the briefest and most direct way. That waste of words is what every teacher, if his experience has been anything like mine, has to be fighting all the time. Nothing could help more in the combat than adherence to the best journalistic models.

Of course everybody who has studied newspapers at all, either from the inside or the outside, observed that in news writing the loose construction is the approved method. That is, the emphasis is put first—first in the story, first in the paragraph, first in the sentence.

Some teachers may rebel against this as being contrary to the lessons taught by the great masters of literature. But there is no great harm in it. The many successful passages that have been made from journalism into other branches of literature prove that. The way in which the journalistic method drives home other points—simplicity, the saving of words, the selection of the important "feature" in any event or series of events—more than compensates for the desertion of certain old ideas about sentence and paragraph construction.

But even if accepted newspaper methods are not followed—even if the teacher scorns the structure of the modern newspaper story, and declines to sanction it, the chief reason for news writing as practice still remains. The teacher may have his class write news as every news expert says it should not be written; yet, if he has written news, he has put life into his English composition.